

Go Vocal summary feedback John Orwell Sports Centre E1

This summary captures feedback from residents and stakeholders from early community conversations convened in January 2026 and forms the starting point for shaping housing development proposals. Your feedback is invaluable, and there will be additional opportunities to share views.

Overview

The resident and stakeholder early community conversation regarding the proposed housing development at the John Orwell Sports Centre (JOSC) reflects strong concerns and/or opposition. While residents consistently affirm the need for affordable and social housing in Tower Hamlets, they believe this site is not suitable due to its significance as a community, sports, heritage, and environmental asset.

Concerns raised are consistent across all respondents, who participated in the early conversations. Dozens of objections have been lodged with the Council.

Key Questions and Concerns Raised

Respondents raised a range of detailed and recurring concerns:

Sports & Community Impact

- Fear of loss or disruption of hockey, football, tennis, volleyball, netball, youth clubs and fitness classes.
- Safeguarding issues from overlooking pitches and children's activities.
- Parking removal undermining visiting teams and accessibility.
- No viable alternative facilities during construction.

Heritage & Conservation

- Impact on:
 - Grade II listed dock wall
 - Locally listed buildings
 - Setting of St John's Church
 - Historic dock basin openness
- Incompatibility with Wapping Conservation Area character.

Amenity Impacts

- Concerns about potential loss of daylight, sunlight and privacy for:
 - Portland Square
 - Spirit Quay
 - Pierhead
 - South Quay
- Rights-to-Light could be invoked by longterm residents.

Mayor's Accelerated Housing Programme



Environment & Safety

- Concerns about impact on wildlife (bats, foxes, sparrowhawks).
- Questions about mitigation of known site contamination or floodrisk.

Construction & Feasibility

- Narrow, cobbled streets unsuitable for HGV access.
- Risk of multiyear centre closure.
- Dust, vibration and structural risk to nearby heritage buildings.

Consultation & Engagement

- Engagement session held outside Wapping.
- Survey perceived as lacking an option to object.
- Requests for clearer timelines, transparent process, and publication of evidence.

Infrastructure Capacity

- GPs, dentists and schools already at capacity to serve new homes and families
- Transport constraints (bus dependency, non stepfree rail station).
- Parking and service access concerns.

Legal Constraints

- Restrictive covenants on sections of the site.
- Conservation area statutory duties.
- Potential for Judicial Review due to procedure and policy conflict.

Sentiment Summary

Positive

- Appreciation for being brought together to share views.
- Support for affordable housing in principle, but not at this site.

Neutral / Informational

Residents requested:

- Clear consultation deadlines
- Full technical evidence (daylight, contamination, ecology, transport, heritage)
- Clear explanation of:
 - Housing mix
 - Tenure (private, affordable, intermediate, etc)
 - Affordability
 - JOSC "retention/reprovision"
- Offline and accessible engagement options
- Clarity on next steps and decisionmaking